

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. An electronic catalog aggregation apparatus provided between catalog provider devices and catalog user devices
5 in an electronic catalog system, the apparatus comprising:
 - a processing unit configured to process electronic catalog data received from registered catalog providers through networks into a prescribed common format;
 - an electronic catalog database configured to store the
10 electronic catalog data as processed by the processing unit;
 - an extraction and conversion unit configured to extract at least one of the electronic catalog data corresponding to a catalog request received from each
15 registered catalog user, from the electronic catalog database, and convert each extracted electronic catalog data into an electronic catalog in a format specified by the catalog request; and
 - a delivery unit configured to deliver electronic
20 catalogs as extracted and converted by the extraction and conversion unit to respective registered catalog users through networks.
2. The electronic catalog aggregation apparatus of claim
25 1, further comprising:
 - a management unit configured to carry out an admission examination by judging whether an admission examination information contained in a prescribed admission request received from a catalog provider matches with a prescribed
30 admission condition or not, register the catalog provider as an electronic catalog distribution source with respect to catalog users when the catalog provider is admitted by the admission examination, and manage charge data for each registered catalog provider according to a processing of
35 electronic catalog data provided by each registered catalog

provider at the processing unit.

3. The electronic catalog aggregation apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:

5 a management unit configured to carry out an admission examination by judging whether an admission examination information contained in a prescribed admission request received from a catalog user matches with a prescribed admission condition or not, register the catalog user as an
10 electronic catalog distribution target with respect to the catalog providers when the catalog user is admitted by the admission examination, and manage charge data for each registered catalog user according to a conversion of electronic catalog data requested by each registered
15 catalog user at the processing unit.

4. The electronic catalog aggregation apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:

a management unit configured to define and manage the
20 prescribed common format for each product classification;
wherein the processing unit processes each electronic catalog data into the prescribed common format corresponding to a product classification of a product to which each electronic catalog data is directed, as defined
25 and managed by the management unit.

5. The electronic catalog aggregation apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:

a management unit configured to store and manage a
30 catalog utilization format of each registered catalog user;
wherein the extraction and conversion unit converts each extracted electronic catalog data according to the catalog utilization format corresponding to a registered catalog user who made the catalog request, as stored and
35 managed by the management unit.

6. The electronic catalog aggregation apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:

5 a data collecting and receiving unit configured to receive each electronic catalog data provided by a registered catalog provider, detect missing catalog data items in each received electronic catalog data, and collect the missing catalog data items from a contents provider other than the registered catalog provider.

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7. The electronic catalog aggregation apparatus of claim 1, further comprising:

15 a company code attaching unit configured to attach to each electronic catalog data a company code of a product provider of a product to which each electronic catalog data is directed, such that the delivery unit delivers each electronic catalog with the company code attached thereon.

20 8. The electronic catalog aggregation apparatus of claim 7, further comprising:

25 a company credit information acquisition unit configured to acquire a company credit information of the product provider corresponding to the company code, and provide the company credit information to a catalog user in response to a request from the catalog user based on the company code attached to the electronic catalog provided to the catalog user.

30 9. The electronic catalog aggregation apparatus of claim 7, further comprising:

35 a company credit information providing unit configured to enable a product purchaser to view a company credit information of the product provider corresponding to the company code attached to the electronic catalog of a product selected by the product purchaser by viewing the

electronic catalog.

10. The electronic catalog aggregation apparatus of claim 7, further comprising:

5 a product search unit configured to carry out a search of a product matching with a search condition indicating a company credit information of a desired product provider as specified by a product purchaser in order to select a product by viewing the electronic catalog, according to the
10 company credit information of the product provider corresponding to the company code attached to the electronic catalog.

11. The electronic catalog aggregation apparatus of claim 15 1, further comprising:

a company credit information storage unit configured to acquire company credit information from a credit standing investigation company and store acquired company credit information; and

20 a company credit information providing unit configured to read out a company credit information of a requested company from the company credit information storage unit and provide the company credit information of the requested company in response to a company credit information request
25 received at the electronic catalog aggregation apparatus.

12. The electronic catalog aggregation apparatus of claim 11, further comprising:

a log preserving unit configured to preserve a log of
30 the company credit information request for each requestor; and

a billing unit configured to bill an information utilization fee to each requestor according to the log of the company credit information request for each requestor
35 preserved by the log preserving unit.

13. The electronic catalog aggregation apparatus of claim 12, further comprising:

5 a payment unit configured to pay company credit information utilization fees to the credit standing investigation company.

14. The electronic catalog aggregation apparatus of claim 11, wherein the company credit information providing unit 10 provides the company credit information of a product provider in response to the company credit information request from a product purchaser, and the electronic catalog aggregation apparatus further comprises:

15 a log preserving unit configured to preserve a log of the company credit information request for each product purchaser; and

20 a billing unit configured to bill an information utilization fee for the company credit information of the product provider that is utilized by each product purchaser to the product provider according to the log of the company credit information request for each requestor preserved by the log preserving unit.

15. A method of electronic catalog aggregation between 25 catalog provider devices and catalog user devices in an electronic catalog system, the method comprising the steps of:

30 processing electronic catalog data received from registered catalog providers through networks into a prescribed common format;

storing the electronic catalog data as processed by the processing step in an electronic catalog database;

35 extracting at least one of the electronic catalog data corresponding to a catalog request received from each registered catalog user, from the electronic catalog

database, and converting each extracted electronic catalog data into an electronic catalog in a format specified by the catalog request; and

delivering electronic catalogs as extracted and
5 converted by the extracting step to respective registered catalog users through networks.

16. A computer usable medium having computer readable program codes embodied therein for causing a computer to
10 function as an electronic catalog aggregation apparatus provided between catalog provider devices and catalog user devices in an electronic catalog system, the computer readable program codes include:

a first computer readable program code for causing
15 said computer to process electronic catalog data received from registered catalog providers through networks into a prescribed common format;

a second computer readable program code for causing
said computer to store the electronic catalog data as
20 processed by the first computer readable program code in an electronic catalog database;

a third computer readable program code for causing
said computer to extract at least one of the electronic catalog data corresponding to a catalog request received
25 from each registered catalog user, from the electronic catalog database, and convert each extracted electronic catalog data into an electronic catalog in a format specified by the catalog request; and

a fourth computer readable program code for causing
30 said computer to deliver electronic catalogs as extracted and converted by the third computer readable program code to respective registered catalog users through networks.

17. A catalog user device in an electronic catalog system,
35 the device comprising:

a catalog unit configured to store electronic catalogs with company codes of product providers attached thereto, and provide an electronic catalog to a product purchaser in response to a catalog viewing request from the product

5 purchaser; and

a company credit information providing unit configured to enable the product purchaser to view a company credit information of a product provider corresponding to a company code attached to the electronic catalog of a
10 product selected by the product purchaser by viewing the electronic catalog.

18. A catalog user device in an electronic catalog system, the device comprising:

15 a catalog unit configured to store electronic catalogs with company codes of product providers attached thereto, and provide an electronic catalog to a product purchaser in response to a catalog viewing request from the product purchaser; and

20 a product search unit configured to carry out a search of a product matching with a search condition indicating a company credit information of a desired product provider as specified by the product purchaser in order to select a product by viewing the electronic catalog, according to a
25 company credit information of a product provider corresponding to a company code attached to the electronic catalog.

19. A catalog user device in an electronic catalog system, the device comprising:

a catalog unit configured to store electronic catalogs with company codes of product providers attached thereto, and provide an electronic catalog to a product purchaser in response to a catalog viewing request from the product
35 purchaser;

5 a product purchaser condition registration unit
configured to register a condition on credit information of
a desired product purchaser as specified by a product
provider in order to limit product purchasers who are
permitted to view the electronic catalog provided by the
product provider; and

10 a catalog viewing permission unit configured to permit
viewing of the electronic catalog of the product provider
by the product purchaser in response to a catalog viewing
request from the product purchaser only when credit
information of the product purchaser satisfies the
condition on credit information of a desired product
purchaser registered by the product purchaser condition
registration unit.

15 20. A method for operating a catalog user device in an
electronic catalog system, the method comprising the steps
of:

20 storing electronic catalogs with company codes of
product providers attached thereto, and providing an
electronic catalog to a product purchaser in response to a
catalog viewing request from the product purchaser; and

25 enabling the product purchaser to view a company
credit information of a product provider corresponding to a
company code attached to the electronic catalog of a
product selected by the product purchaser by viewing the
electronic catalog.

30 21. A method for operating a catalog user device in an
electronic catalog system, the method comprising the steps
of:

35 storing electronic catalogs with company codes of
product providers attached thereto, and providing an
electronic catalog to a product purchaser in response to a
catalog viewing request from the product purchaser; and

carrying out a search of a product matching with a search condition indicating a company credit information of a desired product provider as specified by the product purchaser in order to select a product by viewing the electronic catalog, according to a company credit information of a product provider corresponding to a company code attached to the electronic catalog.

22. A method for operating a catalog user device in an electronic catalog system, the method comprising the steps of:

storing electronic catalogs with company codes of product providers attached thereto, and providing an electronic catalog to a product purchaser in response to a catalog viewing request from the product purchaser;

registering a condition on credit information of a desired product purchaser as specified by a product provider in order to limit product purchasers who are permitted to view the electronic catalog provided by the product provider; and

permitting viewing of the electronic catalog of the product provider by the product purchaser in response to a catalog viewing request from the product purchaser only when credit information of the product purchaser satisfies the condition on credit information of a desired product purchaser registered by the registering step.

23. A computer usable medium having computer readable program codes embodied therein for causing a computer to function as a catalog user device in an electronic catalog system, the computer readable program codes include:

a first computer readable program code for causing said computer to store electronic catalogs with company codes of product providers attached thereto, and provide an electronic catalog to a product purchaser in response to a

catalog viewing request from the product purchaser; and
a second computer readable program code for causing
said computer to enable the product purchaser to view a
company credit information of a product provider

5 corresponding to a company code attached to the electronic
catalog of a product selected by the product purchaser by
viewing the electronic catalog.

24. A computer usable medium having computer readable
10 program codes embodied therein for causing a computer to
function as a catalog user device in an electronic catalog
system, the computer readable program codes include:

a first computer readable program code for causing
said computer to store electronic catalogs with company
15 codes of product providers attached thereto, and provide an
electronic catalog to a product purchaser in response to a
catalog viewing request from the product purchaser; and

a second computer readable program code for causing
said computer to carry out a search of a product matching
20 with a search condition indicating a company credit
information of a desired product provider as specified by
the product purchaser in order to select a product by
viewing the electronic catalog, according to a company
credit information of a product provider corresponding to a
25 company code attached to the electronic catalog.

25. A computer usable medium having computer readable
program codes embodied therein for causing a computer to
function as a catalog user device in an electronic catalog
30 system, the computer readable program codes include:

a first computer readable program code for causing
said computer to store electronic catalogs with company
codes of product providers attached thereto, and provide an
electronic catalog to a product purchaser in response to a
35 catalog viewing request from the product purchaser;

a second computer readable program code for causing
said computer to register a condition on credit information
of a desired product purchaser as specified by a product
provider in order to limit product purchasers who are
5 permitted to view the electronic catalog provided by the
product provider; and

a third computer readable program code for causing
said computer to permit viewing of the electronic catalog
of the product provider by the product purchaser in
10 response to a catalog viewing request from the product
purchaser only when credit information of the product
purchaser satisfies the condition on credit information of
a desired product purchaser registered by the second
computer readable program code.

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